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CENTRALISED SYSTEM FOR e-PROCUREMENT- A NEW RISE IN PUBLIC SECTOR: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In this era of modern world, people are more conscious about the integrity, efficiency and transparency in public sector. Based on the recommendations of the Committee on Public Procurement, headed by Shri.Vinod Dhall, the Department of Expenditure launched a Central Public Procurement Portal (www.eprocure.gov.in) with the help of National Informatics Centre (NIC) for ensuring transparency, which in turn eliminates corruption. As it is in its developing stage, this study is meant for reviewing the progress made through this new initiative. At present, a total of 1300 nodal officers have registered in this portal for availing this facility of e-publishing/e-procurement. Even though the government has issued many circulars for implementing this system of e-procurement for the tenders with an estimated value of Rs. 10 lakhs and above, many organisations are not following this mandatory requirement. The objective of this study is to find out the impact of e-procurement system in our country. It has been found through this study that it is mainly happening in the sector of autonomous bodies and subordinate offices. Government has to take immediate steps for ensuring the participation of entire public sector undertakings. E-procurement system introduced by the central government can be termed as a gift to the suppliers also, as all tenders can be searched by them easily at one point access.

KEYWORDS

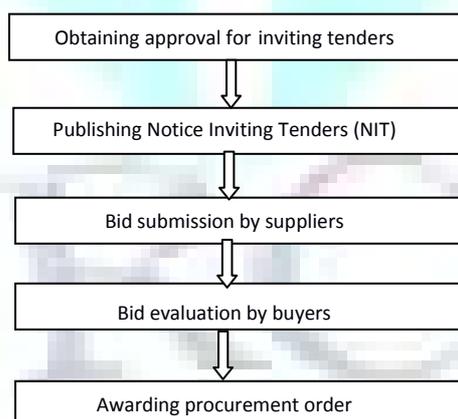
CPP Portal, E-procurement, E-procurement in India.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic procurement (E-procurement) is the use of Information and Communication Technology for procurement of goods and services by the buyers. It refers to the use of Internet-based (integrated) Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to carry out individual or all stages of the procurement process including search, sourcing, negotiation, ordering, receipt, and post-purchase review (Croom & Brandon-Jones, 2004). E-procurement is a link between the buyers and suppliers of goods and services. It helps the buyer to acquire goods through web-based technologies which reduces the cost, time and also enables promptness and transparency in the procurement system. First level definition of e-government procurement provided by the World Bank (2003) is that "E-GP is the use of Information & Communications Technology (especially the Internet) by governments in conducting their procurement relationships with suppliers for the acquisition of goods, works, and consultancy services required by the public sector"

In our words, "E-procurement is the process of doing procurement cycle in a systematic way with the use of web-based technologies for publishing, inviting and accepting tenders for the purchase/sale of goods, services, works, etc."

Before the introduction of e-procurement, the system of procurement was entirely different in government organisations. They were using the manual method of procurement system for purchase at that time. Even though the internet has launched in India in 1995 itself, in the recent years only the system of e-procurement has got a platform in India. Manual process of procurement involves a number of steps, which is figured in the following diagram:

**LIMITATIONS OF MANUAL PROCUREMENT SYSTEM**

- High cost
- Time consuming
- No transparency
- Heavy work load
- Less efficiency and control
- Less number of competitive bids
- Chance for bribery as the payment method is conventional
- Chance for suppliers to syndicate for quoting a high rate
- Possibility of errors

E-procurement involves a set of technology solutions, such as e-tendering, e-auction, e-catalogue/purchasing, e-market place and e-invoicing etc.

ADVANTAGES OF E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

BENEFITS TO THE GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

By implementing e-procurement system, an organisation will get the following benefits:

- Saves -
 - money
 - manpower
 - time
- Ensures smooth functioning and transparency with efficient control
- Implementation of e-procurement does not change any policies or laws related to procurement
- Reduce errors
- As it promotes competition, the organisation will be able to get a competitive rate
- Ensures authentication through Digital Signature Certificate
- There is no scope for the suppliers to join together for quoting a high rate which in effect reduces the competitive number of bids.

We can say that the main impact of e-procurement system is that it makes a good change in m^2t^2 (money, manpower, time and transparency)

BENEFITS TO THE SUPPLIERS

Besides the benefits offered to the organisations, e-procurement also provides the following advantages to the suppliers:

- Transparency: E-procurement system is free from the malpractices likely to be made by certain organisations as the system is very transparent.
- Centralised system for searching of tenders: It was difficult in manual procurement system for the suppliers to search tenders as the organisations were only depending on news papers and other traditional methods for publishing tenders at that time. By the use of latest technology, it is possible for the suppliers to track the tenders, which meets their requirements by a "one-click" process.
- Fast supply of information to the awardees: As the manual system cycle takes long time for completing the processes, the suppliers need to wait for a long time to know about the award of tender. But in e-procurement, the award details are easily available to the suppliers within a short period of time as the entire procurement cycle takes less time by using the internet facilities.
- Reduces the chance for bribery.
- The suppliers are able to resubmit quotation before the last date, in case of modification, if any.
- History of submitted tenders is available in individual suppliers account.
- Anytime accessibility.

NEED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM IN GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

It has been decided by the Dept. of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance in the year 2012, that all the ministries/departments of central government and its attached and subordinate offices would need to commence e-procurement in respect of all procurements with estimated value of Rs. 10 lakhs and above in a phased manner as per the prescribed schedule given below:

- In case of ministries / departments and their attached and subordinate offices: w.e.f. 1st January 2012
- In case of central public sector enterprises: w.e.f. 1st February 2012
- In case of autonomous / statutory bodies: w.e.f. 1st April 2012.

The Govt. of India with the help of National Informatics Centre (NIC) has opened a Central Public Procurement (CPP) Portal at URL www.eprocure.gov.in, to facilitate all the government organisations to publish their tenders and other related activities. NIC also offers class room based and web based training for the users from all the government organisations. It also provides a 24 hour help desk and toll free number facility.

The primary objective of CPP portal is to provide a single point access to the information on procurements made across various Ministries /Departments and all the organisations functioning under them.

Options are given for the organisations either to adopt the e-procurement solution developed by the National Informatics Centre or to develop their own software solution as per the guidelines. However, the organizations using the latter option must publish the tender details simultaneously on the CPP Portal and their website should have a link to the CPP Portal.

The Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, has released the guidelines for compliance to quality requirements of e-procurement systems in August 2011. As per this document, the following are the important aspects to be kept in mind while implementing e-procurement in government organisations:

- Compliance of General Financial Rules, processes, roles (purchasing officer, local purchasing committee, etc.)
- Confidentiality and integrity of information
- Compliance of guidelines issued by Central Vigilance Commission from time to time
- System adaptability and customisation as prescribed by the respective authorities

The guidelines may be used by the stores department of govt. organisations, service providers of e-procurement and e-procurement application/solution providers. It is mandatory for the organisations to test the e-procurement solution through the Standardization, Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate laboratories, which are located in Delhi, Bengaluru and Kolkata. STQC can be directly contacted by the service providers for testing/auditing. The e-procurement solution developed by NIC has also to be certified by STQC. After testing/auditing, STQC will issue a compliance certificate to the concerned organisation.

PRESENT STATUS OF CENTRAL PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL

As on 31st March 2013, a total of 1300 nodal officers have been registered in CPP Portal for availing the facility of e-procurement. The users registered in this portal are classified in to the following categories.

- Central government / department:
- State government /Union territories
- Public sector undertakings
- Public sector banks
- Other organisations

Even though the portal is targeted for the benefit of central govt. ministries/departments, the state government departments and other organisations are also availing this facility.

The following tables depict a picture on e-procurement trends (Table 1) and details of tenders published through CPP Portal (Table 2):

TABLE 1: E-PROCUREMENT TRENDS

Financial Year	No. of Tenders	Value in Crores (INR)
2003 - 2004	1549	3623
2004 - 2005	4901	30822
2005 - 2006	9930	11892
2006 - 2007	21985	31487
2007 - 2008	33904	75119
2008 - 2009	44883	130061
2009 - 2010	26062	28208
2010 - 2011	47182	19675
2011 - 2012	49354	24436

Source: www.eprocurement.gov.in

TABLE 2: MINISTRY-WISE DETAILS OF REGISTERED USERS AND PUBLISHED TENDERS (AS ON 15.04.2013)

Name of Ministry/Department	No. of Registered Users	No. of published tenders
Ministry of Railways (MoR)	27	11565
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	66	7856
Ministry of Coal (MoC)	47	2145
Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)	13	1900
Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG)	64	1636
Ministry of Power (MoP)	24	1576
Department of Atomic Energy (DoAE)	16	1234
Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD)	8	1140
Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises (MoHIPE)	39	663
Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MoCIT)	49	588
State Government/Others	46	478
Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (MoCF)	29	467
Ministry of Mines (MoM)	17	457
Ministry of Shipping (MoS)	23	359
Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA)	26	257
Ministry of Steel (MoS)	28	217
Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD)	18	214
Ministry of Finance (MoF)	38	192
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)	15	160
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)	17	136
Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI)	24	104
Ministry of Tourism (MoT)	9	98
Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)	6	66
Ministry of External Affairs (MoEA)	13	64
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	15	58
Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)	12	54
Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)	12	51
Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA)	5	31
Ministry of Textiles (MoTx)	6	29
Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME)	3	26
Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)	6	24
Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR)	7	24
Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)	1	22
Department of Space (DoS)	10	21
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB)	8	21
Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA)	4	16
Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)	4	14
Cabinet Secretariat (CS)	7	12
Ministry of Culture (MoCul)	7	11
Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MoNRE)	2	6
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions (MoPPGP)	2	4
Ministry of Planning (MoPI)	1	2
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MoOIA)	2	2
Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)	2	2
Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA)	Nil	Nil
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA)	Nil	Nil
Ministry of Law and Justice (MoLJ)	Nil	Nil
Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA)	Nil	Nil
Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)	Nil	Nil
Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR)	Nil	Nil
Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS)	Nil	Nil
Total	778	34002

Even though there are 1300 registered nodal officers under CPP Portal, only 778 registered users have availed this facility of e-procurement. The following figures show the details of ministry-wise registered users (Figure 1) and published tenders (Figure 2):

FIGURE 1: MINISTRY-WISE DETAILS OF REGISTERED USERS OF CPP PORTAL (TOP 20 MINISTRIES)

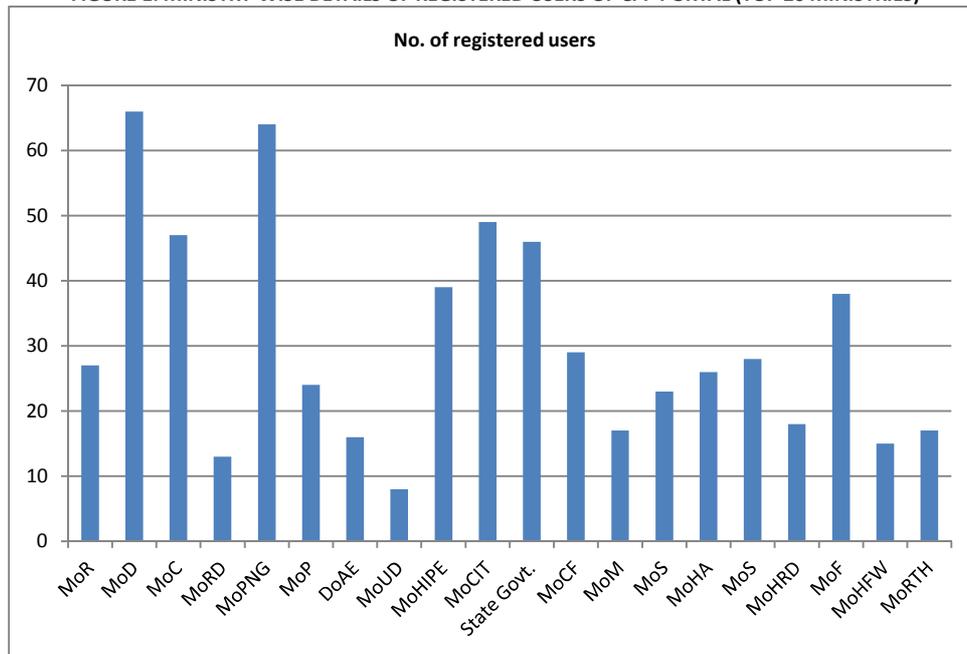
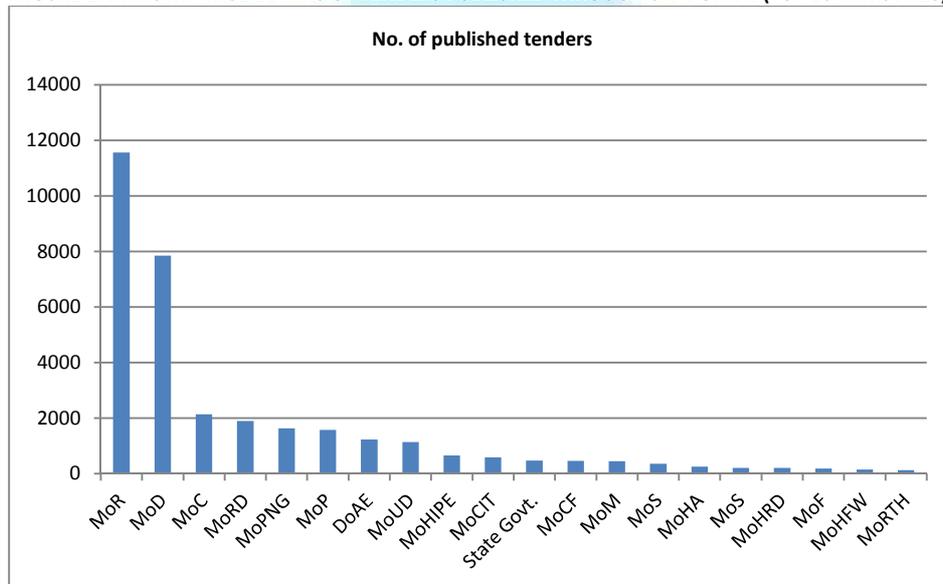


FIGURE 2: MINISTRY-WISE DETAILS OF TENDERS PUBLISHED THROUGH CPP PORTAL (TOP 20 MINISTRIES)



It is clear from the chart that the Ministry of Defence has the highest number of registered users. However, Ministry of Railways holds the credit of publishing highest number of tenders through CPP Portal. Up to March 31st 2013, a total of 18257 bids have been awarded through this portal.

CONSTRAINTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF e-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

Although many organisations implemented e-procurement, this system is yet to be implemented in many organisations including central government autonomous bodies.

The following are the constraints for implementation of e-procurement system in the organisations:

- **Lack of awareness of government orders:** Even though the government has circulated the memorandum to various organisations/departments/autonomous bodies, due to ignorance, it has not been reached the ultimate authority, which has to take action for implementation of e-procurement in the concerned department.
- **Lack of knowledge in using web-based technologies/skilled staff:** Some organisations in rural areas are expressing poor response to this system due to non-availability of skilled staff for implementing this.
- **Lack of proper training:** NIC is providing training programmes to the needy persons. However, NIC could not achieve 100% success in providing training to all the departments. Web-based learning is not possible for those institutes, which lacks adequate skilled staff.
- **Poor response from the part of suppliers:** As some suppliers are showing a negative approach to this method of procurement, it reduces the number of competitive bids.
- **Lack of security:** Another important aspect is the fear about the security of the information submitted by the suppliers and departments.
- **Implementation of their own e-procurement system:** Even though some organisations in government sectors are successfully implemented e-procurement through their own software solution, they fail to upload a copy of the same in the Central Public Procurement Portal and to provide a link to CPP portal in the concerned portal, due to lack of awareness of CPP Portal/government orders.
- **Conservative mentality:** Some organisations are not ready to accept the latest technologies as they believe that the old system is best and it is difficult for such organisations to adapt to the new changing world.

SUGGESTIONS

The scope of CPP Portal may be widened by ensuring participation of all public sector undertakings. Awareness programmes and training programmes may be conducted in state level by NIC for the government organisations. As some organisations are depending private software solution providers for maintaining their own e-procurement portal, it increases the initial cost of implementation. Even though, such portal needs to be tested in STQC Laboratories, it is not being done by organisations. Moreover, those organisations are also required to publish the tenders in CPP portal in addition to their web portal. This creates duplication of work. Hence, government may withdraw the option given for the organisations to adopt their own software solution for e-procurement, instead government may strictly instruct the organisations to use CPP Portal and penalty may be charged from those organizations, which fail to follow this instruction. This change can ensure a full-fledged centralised system of e-procurement.

CONCLUSION

It has been found that the e-procurement system is widely accepted by most of the direct central government organisations. However, the system is yet to be implemented in certain ministries and statutory bodies/autonomous bodies, which still depends on conventional method of procurement. E-procurement system offers transparency, efficiency, better control and saving of money, manpower and time. The success of e-procurement with efficient security system is definitely a good initiative on the part of Govt. of India. Many state government departments initiated their own e-procurement system with the help of NIC. We can definitely say that this new initiative has a positive impact. By providing proper training and ensuring participation from all sectors coming under central government, it can achieve a cent percent success in this venture.

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